

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

State Dept. review
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INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

October 13, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: John H. Holdridge JHH/M

SUBJECT: Cambodian-South Vietnamese Frictions

Attached is a memorandum on this subject produced by CIA at our request with contributions from State. The main points follow:

--At present Cambodian government leaders recognize that continuing ARVN support is necessary until the Cambodian Army can demonstrate it can bear the brunt of the battle for Cambodia.

--The misbehavior of ARVN troops in Cambodia, clearly the main present source of friction between the two countries, has revived and intensified long-standing racial animosity. A steady stream of reports and rumors about acts of looting, raping, killing, and extortion by ARVN continue and senior Cambodian officials are prone to accept all such reports as fact.

--Thus far frictions between Cambodians and South Vietnamese inhibit their military cooperation against Communists to only a limited degree.

--Within their operating areas, ARVN personnel seem to lack respect for either Cambodian authority or sensitivities, and there is little coordination on either military or civil matters. On paper there is a joint committee in Phnom Penh and liaison teams assigned to the various Cambodian provincial chiefs; in practice the Vietnamese seem uninterested in making such institutions effective.

--Although outrages against Cambodians by the VC/NVA, as well as friction between Vietnamese and Cambodian communists, have been reported, the general deportment of the VC/NVA has been better than that of ARVN. In this respect, the ARVN presence, especially in heavily populated areas, may not simply be a "tax" upon Cambodia-South Vietnamese cooperation, but actually counter-productive.

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--One of the most effective devices Lon Nol employed to obtain popular support for the overthrow of Sihanouk was the campaign to get the Vietnamese communists off Cambodian soil. Lon Nol's private contention that the South Vietnamese are the lesser of two evils has been accepted only reluctantly by many of his supporters.

--Lon Nol almost certainly has taken a much tougher line on the question operating in Cambodia because of his experiences with ARVN forces.

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--Emotional elements of pride and animosity work against whatever well-intentioned efforts are made by both Saigon and Phnom Penh to reduce frictions arising from the presence of ARVN troops in Cambodia. However, it seems unlikely that these animosities will vitally affect South Vietnam's ability or willingness to support the Cambodian war effort. Whatever misgivings it may have, Phnom Penh will have little recourse but to ask for South Vietnamese support if the communists seriously threaten major positions.

Attachment

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